BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT
NO. 109
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THE PRIMAL RIDDLE
Part One of Three
DIRECT SALES
ENGLEHART • ABELL • GERACI

PRIMAL RIDDLE

Chapter one: Nasty, Brutish and Short!

JUST ANOTHER NIGHT ON THE JOB--

--THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD, BECAUSE IT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING.

STEVE ENGLEHART -writer-
DUSTY ABELL -penciller-
DREW GERACI -inker-
DIGITAL CHAMELEON -computer colorist-
WILLIE SCHUBERT -letterer-
CHUCK KIM -asst. editor-
ARCHIE GOODWIN -editor-

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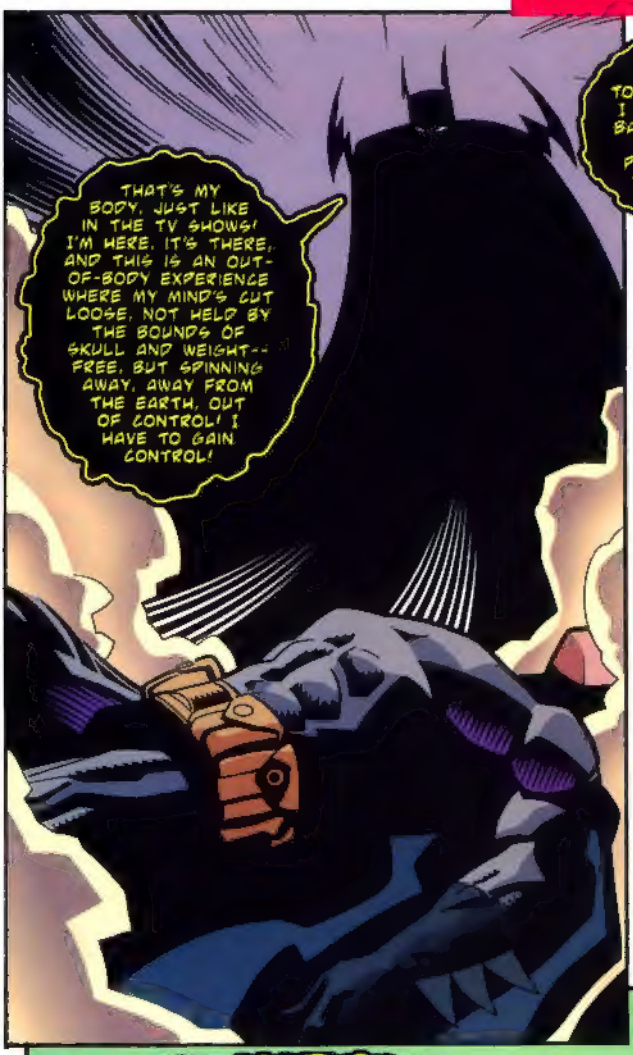
SO, YOU UNDERSTOOD MY RIDDLE!
CHILD'S PLAY, RIDDLER! "WHAT IS ENDLESS, BUT NEVER ENOUGH?"
TIME!
AND WHEN WE THINK OF TIME IN GOTHAM CITY, WE THINK OF THE GREAT CLOCK OF THEATRE SQUARE.
THEN, SINCE YOU PHONED THE POLICE WITH IT AT TEN, AND THE SHOWS LET OUT AT ELEVEN, I KNEW YOU WERE HOPING THERE WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TIME FOR ME TO GET HERE--
--TO STOP YOUR KIDNAPPING ATTEMPT!
THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.
ANOTHER IS THAT I'VE MISSED YOUR SQUARE JAW, BATMAN.
IT REMINDS ME THAT SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE STILL HAS A CONSCIENCE.
THAT'S NOT WHY I HAUNT THE NIGHT. I DO IT BECAUSE I SWORE I'D DO IT--
KRAM
--ON THE GRAVES OF MY PARENTS!
YOUR PROPOSED VICTIM'S GETTING CRAMPS, SO LET'S WRAP THIS UP AND UNWRAP HIM!
OH, BUT SINCE YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT TIME--
TELL ME WHAT COMES AT THE END OF IT--
--AND AT THE BEGINNING OF ETERNITY!

THE LETTER
EEEEEEEEEE
TOO BAD YOU WON'T HAVE TIME TO SOLVE MY PRIMAL RIDDLE!
BANG
KCHONK
TONIGHT'S JUST THE BEGINNING FOR ME--
--THE END FOR YOU!

BZZZT!
TUNKH
AAAGGHKH!


THAT'S MY BODY. JUST LIKE IN THE TV SHOWS! I'M HERE. IT'S THERE. AND THIS IS AN OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE WHERE MY MIND'S CUT LOOSE. NOT HELD BY THE BOUNDS OF SKULL AND WEIGHT--FREE. BUT SPINNING AWAY. AWAY FROM THE EARTH. OUT OF CONTROL! I HAVE TO GAIN CONTROL!

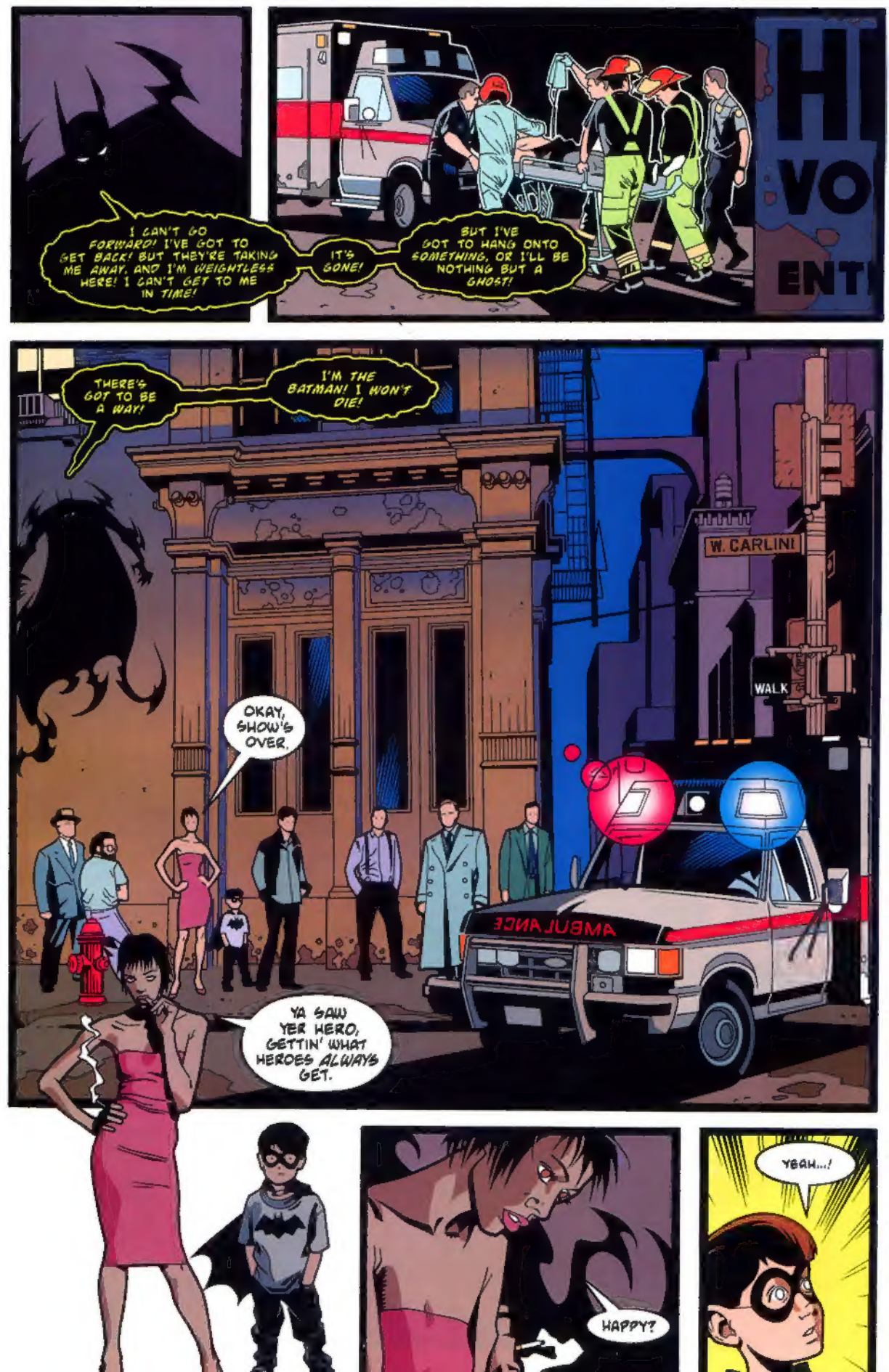
I HAVE TO GAIN CONTROL TO BE THE BATMAN. I HAVE TO BE THE BATMAN BECAUSE I SWORE ON MY PARENTS' GRAVES THAT I'D FIGHT CRIME.
STOP IT! STOP SPINNING! BE THE BATMAN! DON'T LOSE! DON'T DIE! PEOPLE CAN GET BACK IN THEIR BODIES--

OR PEOPLE CAN COME TO THOSE WHO LOVE THEM.

MOM! DAD! THEN IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY. YOUR LOVED ONES WELCOMING--NO!
IT'S NOT TIME! I'M NOT FINISHED!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BRUCE. YOU'VE FULFILLED YOUR VOW TO US.
WE'VE WAITED ALL THESE YEARS FOR YOU, HONEY. AND AT LAST WE'RE TOGETHER AGAIN.
WE'RE BOTH SO TERRIBLY PROUD OF YOU, SON.

I-I DID IT ALL FOR YOU...

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
YOU COULD SEE ME? YOU CAN WATCH FROM THE OTHER SIDE?
LIKE A BAT IN THE NIGHT
BATS DON'T SEE, THEY USE SONAR--
SHHH SHHH, LITTLE BOY YOU'LL SEE. COME.
I'LL...
...SEE...
HAVE
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
ADRENALINE
TO
GET
HIM
NOW!
WE GOT HIM!
THANK GOD! I DON'T WANT THE BATMAN'S DEATH ON MY WATCH!
WHAT--?
MOM! DAD! DONT LEAVE ME!
DON'T LEAVE ME NOW, IN NO MAN'S LAND!
EEEEEEEEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP


I CAN'T GO FORWARD! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK! BUT THEY'RE TAKING ME AWAY, AND I'M WEIGHTLESS HERE! I CAN'T GET TO ME IN TIME!
IT'S GONE!
BUT I'VE GOT TO HANG ONTO SOMETHING, OR I'LL BE NOTHING BUT A GHOST!
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY!
I'M THE BATMAN! I WON'T DIE!
W. CARLINI
WALK
OKAY, SHOW'S OVER.
AMBULANCE
YA SAW YER HERO, GETTIN' WHAT HEROES ALWAYS GET.
HAPPY?
YEAH...!

MIDNIGHT--

BATMAN, YOUR LUCK IS *AMAZING!* THE ELECTRICITY HIT YOU *SO HARD* IT BLASTED YOU *FREE* BEFORE YOU *BURNED* TOO BADLY.

SECOND DEGREE OVER SEVENTY *PERCENT OF YOUR BODY*, BUT THAT'S *GREAT* CONSIDERING THE *ALTERNATIVES*. PROBABLY THE SAME ON YOUR *SCALP*, BUT DON'T WORRY-- NOBODY TOUCHED THE *MASK*.

WE *RESPECT* YOU HERE.

IF YOU WERE *ANY OTHER* PATIENT, I'D ORDER YOU TO *STAY IN BED*, BUT I'VE READ ENOUGH ABOUT YOU TO KNOW YOU'LL JUST GET UP AND GO *ANYWAY*, *heh heh*.

DR. AUSTIN

WHY?

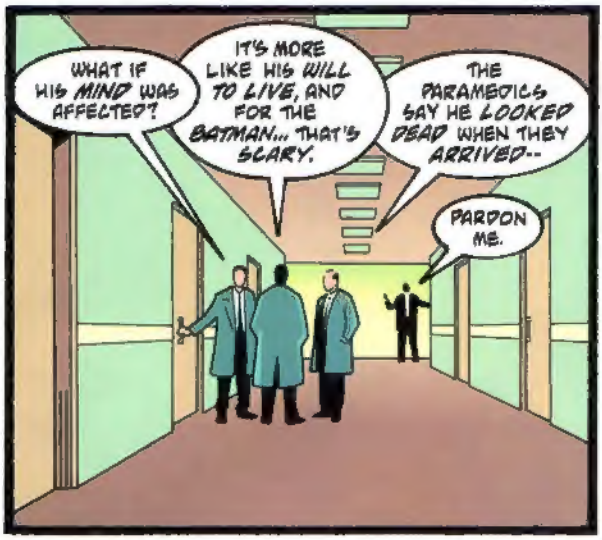
WELL, AS I *SAY*, THAT JOLT WOULD HAVE *KILLED MOST MEN*, BUT... I MEAN, FROM WHAT I'VE READ... YOU'RE SORT OF, WELL... *DRIVEN*.

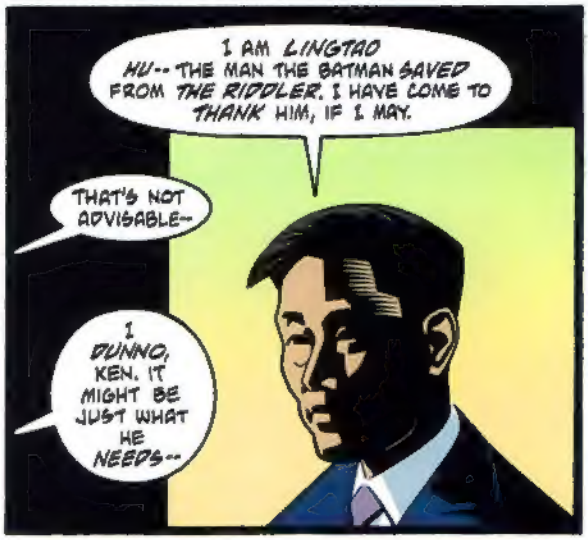
HURT. REST.

OH, WELL, SURE, WHATEVER...

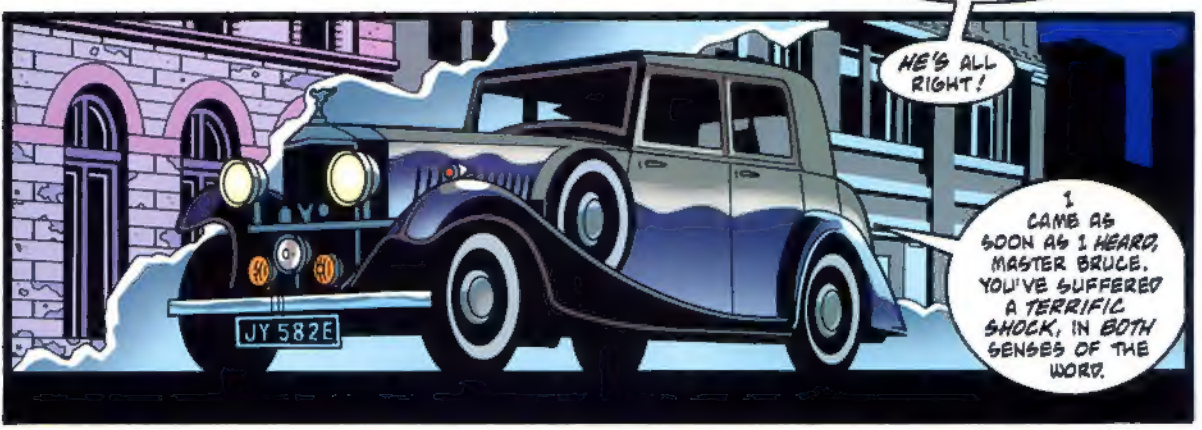
YOU'LL HAVE THE *BEST CARE* AS LONG AS YOU *WANT* IT. I'M A *BIG* ADMIRER--

SLEEP.


WHAT IF HIS MIND WAS AFFECTED?
IT'S MORE LIKE HIS WILL TO LIVE, AND FOR THE BATMAN... THAT'S SCARY.
THE PARAMEDICS SAY HE LOOKED DEAD WHEN THEY ARRIVED--
PARDON ME.


I AM LINGTAO HU-- THE MAN THE BATMAN SAVED FROM THE RIDDLER. I HAVE COME TO THANK HIM, IF I MAY.
THAT'S NOT ADVISABLE--
I DUNNO, KEN. IT MIGHT BE JUST WHAT HE NEEDS--

--THE WAY HE'S JUST LYING--
I KNEW IT! AS SOON AS HE HAD A CHANCE, HE TOOK OFF!


HE'S ALL RIGHT!
I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD, MASTER BRUCE. YOU'VE SUFFERED A TERRIFIC SHOCK, IN BOTH SENSES OF THE WORD.
JY 582E

BUT I HAVE YOU NOW. ALFRED WILL ALWAYS PUT YOU RIGHT...

MIDNIGHT THIRTY--
SEE, IT'S LIKE THIS, CHÉRIE...
STAINLESS SIEVE
SIEVES WERE ONCE KNOWN AS "RIDDLES." DON'T ASK ME WHY. I DIDN'T DO IT. THE SERBS CREATED THEM-- SIEVES, NOT RIDDLES.
THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU, EDDIE-- YOU'VE GOT A MONKEY MIND.
I'M INTO MONKEY BUSINESS, SO I NEEDED A FRONT, AND A WAY TO LAUNDER MY PLUNDER-- YOU'VE NO IDEA HOW HARD IT IS TO LAUNDER SOMEBODY'S FAMILY JEWELS--
OH, I THINK I DO.
Mmm. WELL, I'M NO SMALL BUSINESSMAN. SIZE IS ALL! AND WE MAKE GOOD SIEVES, DOGGONIT! A HOUSEWIFE CAN BE PROUD TO PUT HER PASTA IN MY PRODUCT!
HEY, WE'RE BUILDING A WHOLE SECOND TOWER. WE'RE EXPANDING TO KUALA LUMPUR. I'VE BEEN GREEN-MAILED!
ANYWAY, BEING PRESIDENT GIVES ME A LEGITIMATE SCREEN FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC-- PRESIDENTS DON'T MINGLE, Y'KNOW--
--AND IT'S JUST A WHOLE HECK OF A LOT OF FUN. IT'S GOOD TO BE THE PREZ!
NOW IT'S EVEN BETTER BECAUSE MY PRIMAL RIDDLE'S ROLLING AND THE BATMAN'S DEAD!
"WHAT DID THE ENVELOPE SAY TO THE STAMP?"
"STICK WITH ME AND WE'LL GO PLACES."

THE NIGHT GIVES WAY TO DAY-- A NEW DAY FOR SOME--

--THE SAME OLD, SAME OLD FOR OTHERS--

YAAH! TAKE DAT, RIDDLER! UNGH!

UNGH! CAN'T STOP DA BATMAN!

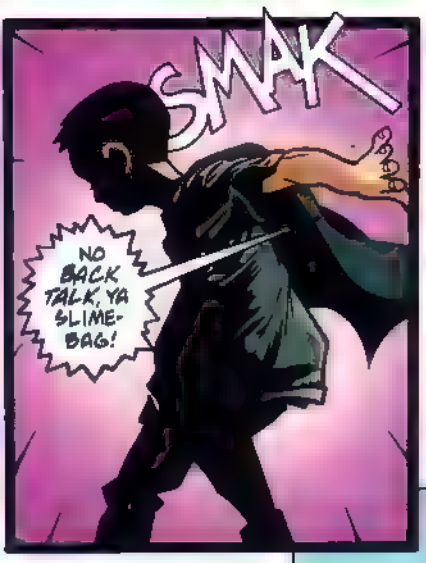
UNKH! YOU C'N KNOCK ME IN' ELECTRICITY! YOU C'N KNOCK ME INNA NEX' WEEK! BUT I'M DA BATMAN AN' I'LL BEAT YER SCRAWNY BUTT! UNGH!

KRASH!

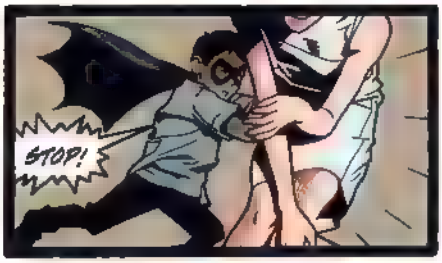
WHA' THA HELL'RE YA WAKIN' US UP FOR, YA LI'L SLIMEBAG?

HA'N'T I TOL' YA TA SHUDDUP WHILE MOM'S WIT' UNCA CHARLIE? YER BAD, TOM! BAD!

NO, I'M NOT! DON'T SAY THAT TO ME!

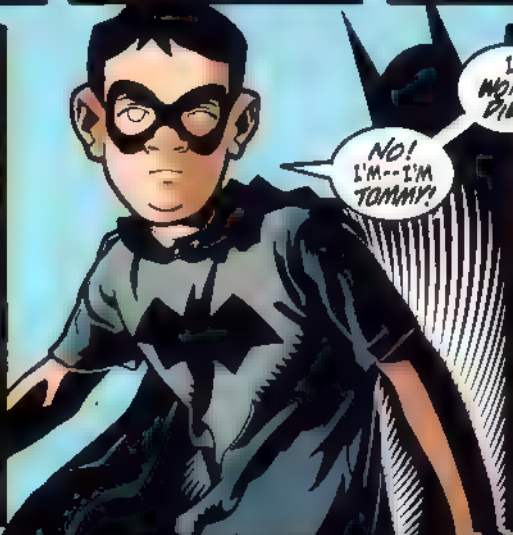

SMAK
NO BACK TALK, YA SLIME-BAG!

MOM--


STOP!

GET OFFA HER!
I'M GONNA WHIP YA--

--LIKE YOUSE DESERVES!


NO! I'M--I'M TOMMY!
I WON'T DIE!

DIE? YOU'LL WISH YA WUZ DEAD BEFORE I'M T'RU WID YU!
NO!

NO!

NO!

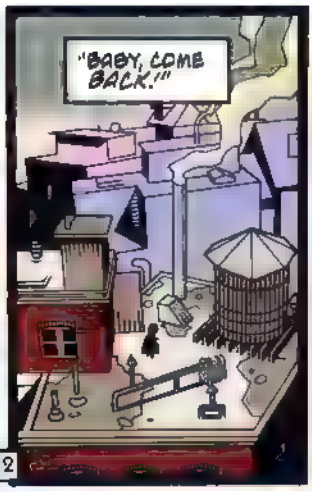
NO!
OW!

GETTIM OFF ME!

LEA' ME ALONE!

WHAT?
M'MUDDER? WHO CARES?

LOOK HOW SHE TREATS ME! YOU'RE WATCHIN' TOO--
WHA'SA MADDER WID 'IM, CHARLIE? IT DON' SOUND LIKE 'IM!
TOMMY!


"BABY, COME BACK!"

"LEDDIM GO, GRACY!"
"FERGET DAT LI'L WHITE TRASH!"

NIGHT FALLS LIKE A DEAD BLACK CAPE...

THERE NOW. THE BURN SALVE WE ALWAYS USE IS WORKING WONDERS.

I MUST SAY, WHEN I CAME FOR YOU, YOU WERE QUITE SUBDUED, BUT... BETTER NOW, I EXPECT.

I SAY, BETTER NOW, MASTER BRUCE.

INCARCERATED BLACKGATE
KILLER CROC

INCARCERATED BLACKGATE
HUGO STRANGE

STATUS: AT LARGE
RIDDLER

STATUS: AT LARGE
CATWOMAN

INCARCERATED BELLE REVE
MR. NICE

INCARCERAT ARKHAM ASY
JOKER

GOOD GOD, WHAT DID THAT SHOCK DO TO HIM? HE SIMPLY SITS THERE--ALL VITAL SIGNS STRONG, BUT...

I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS. PERHAPS HE DOES NEED MORE THAN I CAN GIVE HIM THIS TIME.

RING RING

AH. THERE'S THE TELEPHONE FROM POLICE HEADQUARTERS, SIR.

IT WAS JUST THIS TIME LAST NIGHT THAT THEY CALLED ABOUT THE RIDDLER...

I'LL ANSWER IT THEN, SHALL I?

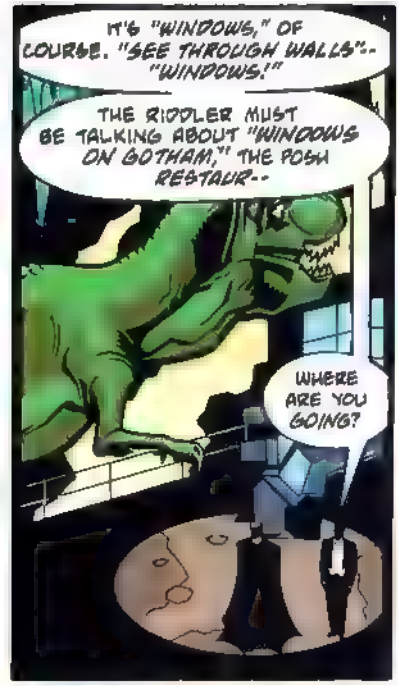
YES?

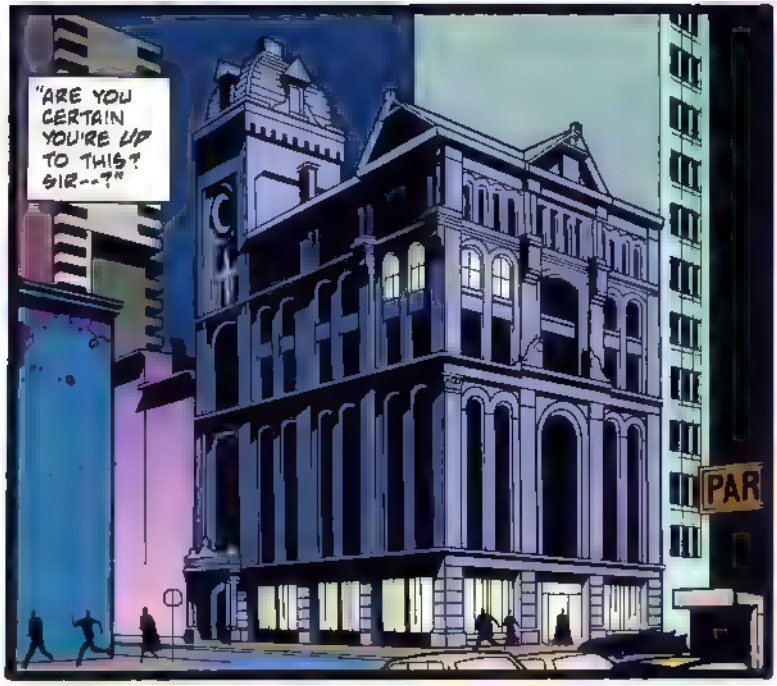
BATMAN! ANOTHER RIDDLE--CRAZIER THAN THE LAST ONE! LISTEN--

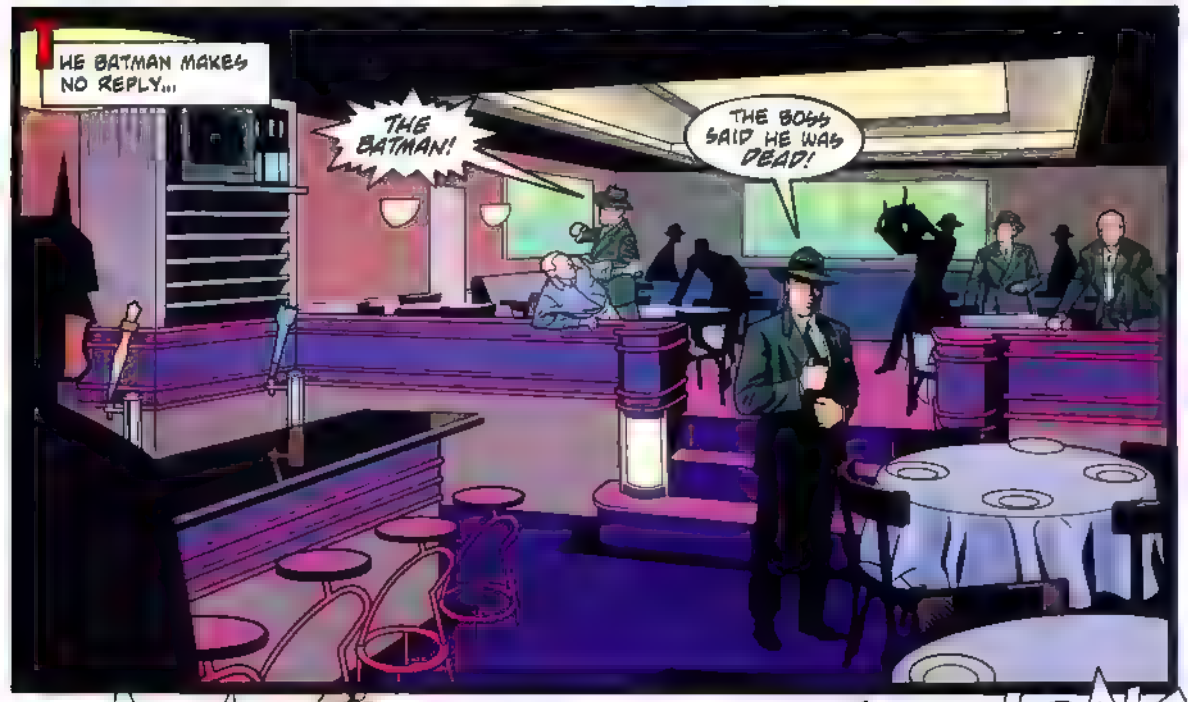
"SOME PLACES IN THE WORLD CAN STILL RECALL--AN ANCIENT INVENTION TO SEE THROUGH WALLS."

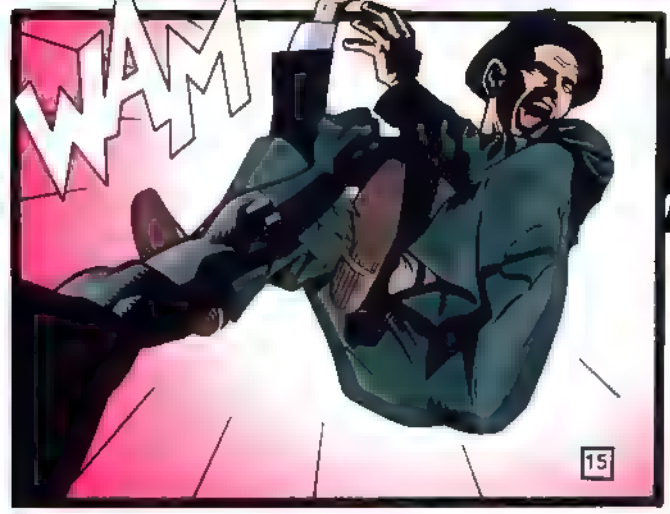
YOU HEARD, OF COURSE. I IMAGINE YOU'VE SUSSED THAT OUT EASILY ENOUGH, SIR.

SIR?


IT'S "WINDOWS," OF COURSE. "SEE THROUGH WALLS"-- "WINDOWS!"
THE RIDDLER MUST BE TALKING ABOUT "WINDOWS ON GOTHAM," THE POSH RESTAUR--
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?


"ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU'RE UP TO THIS? SIR--?"
PAR


HE BATMAN MAKES NO REPLY...
THE BATMAN!
THE BOSS SAID HE WAS DEAD!


WAM
15

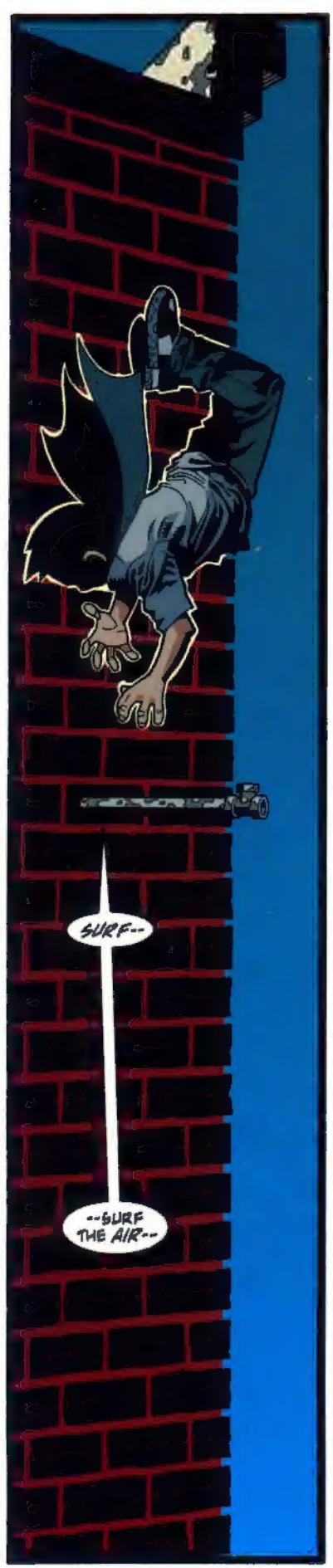
KRAK
THE RIDDLER NEVER BEATS THIS GUY!
Y' CAN'T BEAT 'IM!

THE BOSS LIKES TO PLAY WITH 'IM-- BRING 'IM TO US, SO WE KNOW RIGHT WHERE 'E IS!
BLAM
AKH!
I'LL BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT, YOU HEAR ME?!
KRAK
Uhn!
OWW!
SLA
16

RIDDLER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! AREN'T YOU HOLDING UP A HOLE IN THE GROUND?
AND HOW DID YOU KNOW WHICH DOOR WE'D BE USING?
WINDOWS. RICH OWNER. PRIVATE ENTRANCE.
LOGICAL.

OR LUCKY! BUT YOU WON'T GET THE PRIMAL RIDDLE WITH LOGIC!
GET 'IM, BOYS! KILL 'IM! I'M BEHIND YOU ALL THE WAY!
AND ALL THE WAY BEHIND YOU!
KRACK
SAY SOMETHIN', DAMN YOU!
GOD! SAY SOMETHIN'!
NO.
Exit
THERE WAS SOMETHING VERY WEIRD ABOUT THAT! SOMETHING I CAN'T QUITE GET A HANDLE ON!
AS THE PARROT SAID WHEN HE FLEW OUT THE MATHEMATICIAN'S WINDOW, "I AM POLYGON!"
LIKE A RIDDLE...!
18

NEAR THE RIVER--
WHY ARE YA HERE? WHY'RE YA PUSHIN' ME!
DRINK
NOW
ARE YA AN ANGEL? DIDJA COME T'TAKE ME AWAY FROM THIS?
NO! YER DARK! YER SCARY!
STOP TALKIN'A ME!
GET OUTGETOUT GETOUTGET OUTGET OUT
GET OUT OF MY HEAD! I NEVER DID NOTHIN' TO YOU!
IT'S NOT FAIR! YOU CAN'T HANG ONTO ME!
I'M A KID!
IT'S TOO MUCH--
19


SURF--
--SURF THE AIR--

»UNNGHHH!»

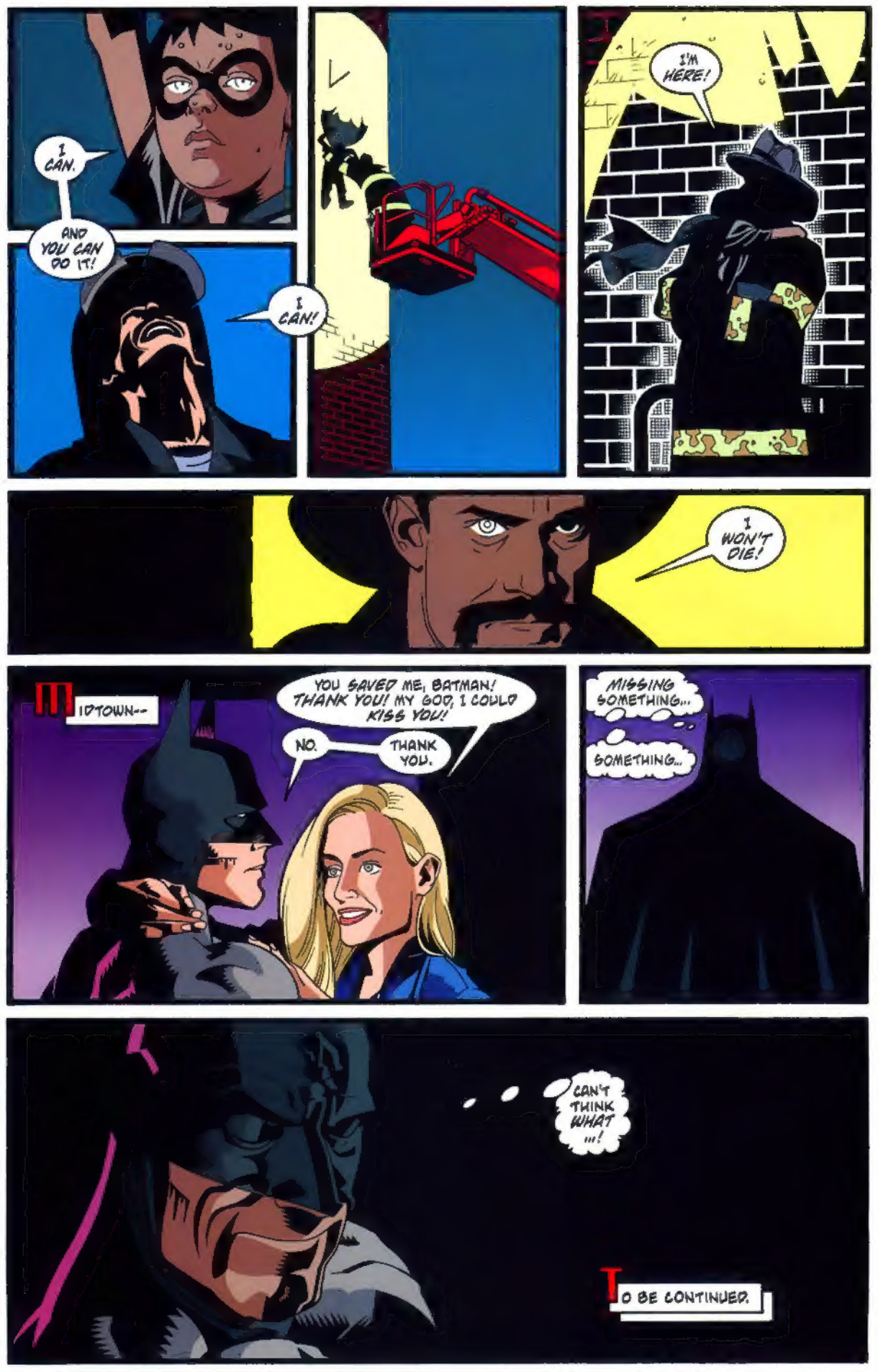
POP
M' SHOULDER--!

I CAN'T--

I CAN'T... HOLD ON...

BUT-- I WON'T DIE!
I'M TOMMY! I WON'T DIE!!
R R R R R R
THE FIRETRUCKS ARE COMING...

IT'S YOURS, INFANTE!
HE WON'T LAST TILL I GET UP THERE, CHIEF!
HE'LL GO, AND TAKE ME WITH HIM! THIS IS STUPID!
YOU'VE GOT TO TRY, DAMMIT!
9
HOLY--! MOVE THE LADDER! IT'S TOO FAR AWAY!
HE CAN'T HOLD ON ANOTHER SECOND!


I CAN.
AND YOU CAN DO IT!
I CAN!
I'M HERE!
I WON'T DIE!
MIDTOWN--
YOU SAVED ME, BATMAN! THANK YOU! MY GOD, I COULD KISS YOU!
NO.
THANK YOU.
MISSING SOMETHING...
SOMETHING...
CAN'T THINK WHAT ...!
TO BE CONTINUED.